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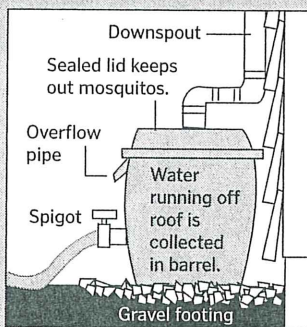
Ruling puts sewer district closer to storm-water fee

How to save 25% off your storm water fee

Property owners can cut the amount of their bill by installing ways to mitigate storm water runoff from their home. Here are some things you can do.

Install rain barrels

Homeowners will need at least two rain barrels or cisterns that can collect at least half of the rain running off their roof.



Find out more

Rain barrels: cuyahogawcd.org/rainbarrels.htm

Plant a rain garden

Runoff water from roof is directed to a garden planted with native plants such as Jacob's Ladder, switch grass and others that are tolerant of wet or dry conditions.

- Water collected in the garden should drain within two days.
- At least 25 percent of rain water would need to drain to the rain garden.
- Typical size between 100 and 300 square feet.

Replace pavement

Another option is to replace sidewalks, driveways or patios with pervious pavements to reduce runoff. Here, stepping-stones replace a sidewalk. At least 500 square feet of hard surface must be removed and replaced with vegetation or at least 1,000 square feet of pervious driveway must be installed.

SOURCE: Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

KEN MARSHALL | THE PLAIN DEALER

FEE

FROM A1

Ruling puts district closer to rate hike

Sewer officials have contended that the \$38 million is sorely needed to address flooding, erosion and water quality for its 330,000 ratepayers in Cuyahoga and northern Summit counties.

The plan is in addition to a settlement with the U.S. EPA in which the district, which provides sewer services to Cleveland and more than 60 suburbs, must spend up to \$3 billion over the next few decades to reduce sew-

age flowing into Lake Erie. That settlement is the driving force behind expected rate increases of 13 percent a year over the next five years.

"This was the biggest obstacle we faced," Ciaccia, executive director of the district, said of this week's court ruling. "Now we can move forward on the elements of the actual program."

"The sewer district has invested millions of dollars to not only study storm water-related issues but develop regional solutions."

Cuyahoga County Executive Ed Fitzgerald on Thursday brought together the district and mayors from some of the communities it covers to kick-start talks over the

proposed fee.

Ciaccia said Pokorny's ruling could help move those talks along.

"Yes, the communities are still challenging the amount," he said. "But now that the judge has ruled that we have the legal authority to actually begin a storm water management program, maybe we can work this out."

Pretrial talks are continuing, said Mary Ann Kovach, chief counsel for the Summit County prosecutor.

"But there are also some very specific issues that can't be decided at this point," she said. "We consider this ruling a win for us as well because seven of our communities won't have to

pay legal fees and won't have the storm water plan imposed on them."

The judge ruled that Bath Township, Boston Heights, Hudson, Northfield Center Township, Richfield Township, Twinsburg and Twinsburg Township were not "member communities" because they had never entered into written agreements with the district, which provides services to only a portion of each community.

Four Summit County communities remain in the lawsuit: Northfield, Macedonia, Richfield and Sagamore Hills Township.

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